

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rappahannock Area Health District Vaccinating Front Line Healthcare Providers Against COVID-19

(Fredericksburg, Virginia) -- The Rappahannock Area Health District (RAHD) is currently conducting closed "point of dispensing" (POD) COVID-19 vaccination clinics specifically for "Phase 1a" priority groups. These are the first who are eligible to receive the vaccine and include health system personnel with direct contact or a high risk of contact with COVID-positive patients. At this time, RAHD's PODs are specifically for Phase 1a, and appointments are required. The COVID-19 vaccine is not yet available to the general public and these are not public events.

RAHD's vaccination planning team is reaching out to **healthcare providers** in the health district. Local Phase 1a healthcare providers who wish to receive the vaccine and have not yet connected with the health department can complete the form available at <https://tinyurl.com/RAHD-healthcare-vaccines> to initiate the scheduling process.

Phase 1a also includes long-term care residents and staff who are being vaccinated through a federal partnership with CVS and Walgreen's. Phase 1a hospital based healthcare workers and practices that are part of a hospital-based system will receive their vaccines through the health care systems in which they work.

"After nearly a year of responding to the COVID-19 crisis, there is certainly cause for excitement that the availability of safe and effective vaccines will help our community return to some sense of normalcy," says Dr. Denise Bonds, RAHD's Acting Health Director. "At this point, we have a limited supply of the vaccine available as production continues, and RAHD will be distributing the vaccine according to the tiered approach outlined by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), beginning with frontline healthcare workers."

Vaccine supplies are allocated weekly, and priority groups are designated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and the Virginia Department of Health. RAHD will continue working to identify and vaccinate everyone who wishes to receive the vaccine, in order of the priority groups.

"For vaccines to be effective, a majority of individuals in a given population need to receive the vaccine, and we anticipate our own vaccine distribution and vaccine promotion will continue through at least the first six months of 2021," said Dr. Bonds. "In the meantime, it is important to continue to practice the precautions we know help stop the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19: wear a mask, practice social distancing, and wash your hands frequently."

Due to the large mobilization of RAHD clinical staff to COVID-19 vaccination PODs, the local health district is reducing hours for regular clinical services. All services are available by appointment only, and telemedicine appointments may be available at additional times for certain services. Effective January 4, 2021, immunizations- not including COVID-19 vaccinations- will be available on Mondays at the Spotsylvania Health Department and appointments related to Family Planning and Sexually Transmitted Infections will be available on Tuesdays at the Fredericksburg Health Department.

For more information about RAHD's clinical services and COVID-19 response, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/rappahannock/. For more information on COVID-19 vaccination in Virginia, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine.

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